

The Paradox of Redemptive Dynamite



Propaganda by Deed in France

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"Anything really new, to be accepted, requires that many fools die. We heartily wish this to happen as soon as possible."

—Felix Feneon

The phrase "propaganda by deed" is often inaccurately attributed to Malatesta, but the theory of "la propaganda par le fait" was actually propounded by the first-wave French anarchist Paul Brousse (1844-1912) in the columns of *La Solidarite Revolutionnaire*, a radical French-language newspaper that Brousse founded in 1873 while in exile in Spain following the defeat of the Commune. Closely connected with the main French exile group in Switzerland, *La Solidarite Revolutionnaire* was strongly Bakunist in language and imagery, lambasting bourgeois society with grandiose promises of instant destruction (the paper was smuggled into France through Sete, at that time one of the most important ports in the country). Described by Kropotkin as "full of mental activity, uproarious, sharp, lively" and "ready to develop any idea with a geometrical logic," Brousse was an important figure in the Jura Federation (basically, the anarchist and anti-authoritarian socialist faction) of the First International after his arrival in Switzerland in 1873.

In the summer of 1873, Brousse immortalized a concept and inaugurated an era with his article *Propagande par le fait*, which encouraged mass insurrection through public displays of disruption and demolition orchestrated to match incendiary rhetoric with concrete acts designed to topple the established order. As the article explained, the first phase of revolutionary propaganda began with the diffusion of easily comprehended, and practical, ideas—such as those of Anselme Bellegarrigue. The second phase consisted of action, the function of which was to inspire the "people" to overcome their indifference or powerlessness in the face of State oppression; Brousse cited the 1871 Paris Commune, a workers' demonstration in Bern provocatively using the socialist red flag, and the Benevento uprising in Italy—where a small group of anarchists occupied the village of Letino and burned the land tax records—as examples of "propaganda by the deed" (the role of the Commune as a revolutionary agent, or embryo, was central to Brousse's theory of anarchism). Brousse laced his acidic new doctrine with strong additives of apocalyptic flavor, but in essence, his notion of "propaganda by deed" amounted to what today would be called direct action. The concept in general lent itself to harsher readings, however, and was given additional and decisive encouragement as a method by the very hopelessness of the total European situation in the 1870's and an atmosphere of general expectation that the great Revolution was close at hand. The incontestable value of this fresh tactical formula was that it reconciled anarchist rhetoric with anarchist

praxis and accepted as its starting-point **autonomous** revolt.

What Brousse's article ultimately did was light the fuse and throw the issue open to public debate within the European anarchist movement. In due course, other key figures in the French anarchist movement advocated "moving out of the sphere of legality in order to act in that of illegality" and once the chosen methods had been announced, the French anarchist press fleshed them out by publishing practical guides to bomb-building. As early as 1887, a d.i.y. manual on the use of dynamite, *L'Indicateur anarchiste*, was published and promptly translated into English, Italian, Spanish, and German (this simple guide to nitroglycerin could be acquired for 10 francs). This zealotry for the "technical and chemical sciences" helped set in motion a wave of individual attacks involving explosives between 1892 and 1894, attacks which established "propaganda by the deed" as a spectacular and primal mode of communication.

Ravachol **(1859-1892)**

"Ravachol's head has rolled at their feet; they fear it will explode, just like a bomb! And for Christ sake shut up about your whore of a society; it has no need of being defended—it's at its death rattle!"

—Pere Peinard

François Claudius Koenigstein, better known as Ravachol, was a French anarchist who came to be considered the "avatar of dynamite" and who achieved canonization amongst other anarchists' mere hours after his execution. A difficult early life, with many years spent wandering France looking for work while being paid a pittance, taught him to hate his exploiters and by age 18 he was a convinced atheist and partially-convinced socialist; continued reading led him to choose anarchism as his personal response to being a social outcast floundering amid the economic disarray of 19th century France. Ravachol worked hard to educate himself, but his spelling, grammar and command of language always remained at a childlike level and his grasp of anarchism (or at least his articulation of it) seemed stuck in a half-born, unshaped condition. Financially, his life was always a wreck—his interests as a laborer and the interests of capital were constantly in antagonism and vexation piled upon vexation, restriction upon restriction, burden upon burden, until Ravachol was slowly hammered out on the official anvil, like some dark shadow or terrible caricature of this poverty-based social system. The more broken members of Ravachol's caste submitted to the preordained order of things, but Ravachol was maddened by it, and hit upon criminality as the weapon of the weaker against the stronger. Ravachol's criminal behavior followed a checkered—and almost cursed—path, from failed liquor smuggling

to failed counterfeiting, to grave-robbing and unpremeditated murder in the course of a poorly-planned burglaries—with little to indicate that he'd go on to attain the stature and influence that he very shortly would.

On the night of March 29th, 1886, Ravachol impulsively committed his first murders during the botched robbery of an old retire named Rivollier who was reputed to possess considerable savings. Ravachol broke into his house on the outskirts of the village of La Varizelle with a hatchet, and surprising Rivollier in bed, killed him by splitting his skull. Rivollier's domestic servant, alarmed for her own life, fled into the road, pursued by an equally panicked Ravachol, who killed her as well. Five years elapsed after this incident before Ravachol had to look elsewhere for the means of replenishing his purse. Once again, he chose a feeble and infirm target, an old hermit named Brunel who dwelled near the village of Chambles and was rumored to possess a small hoard of gold. Ravachol bungled this home invasion too, applying such excessive force to the 90-year old that he suffocated him. The hermit's hut was full of gold, silver and copper coins and Ravachol made off with quite a score, but he'd been noticed on his travels backwards and forwards to the hut, and he promptly became the prime suspect. The next day he was arrested, as were his mistress and two associates named Pierre Crozet and Claude Fachard, who had stored the hermit's stolen loot.

Escaping from police custody, Ravachol, under the alias "Leon Leger", established a criminal haven for himself in Saint Denis, the northern suburb of Paris, which was already a hotbed of anarchism and from which an anonymously authored journal of explosives recipes titled "Anti-Bourgeois Products" had been produced. Ravachol linked up with the anarchists Jus-Beala, Faugoux, Drouhet, and Charles Simon, running various petty rackets and hosting anarchist study groups. Ravachol and his band were incensed by events that occurred on May 1st, 1891, at Fourmies, where a workers demonstration had taken place for the eight hour day. The Police opened fire on the crowd, resulting in the deaths of two men, four women and three children amongst the demonstrators. The same day, at Clichy, disturbances arose in a procession in which anarchists were taking part and three were arrested and taken to the commissariat of police. At the commissariat, they were interrogated and brutalized with beatings and injuries. A trial (the Clichy Affair) ensued, in which two of the three anarchists were sentenced to prison terms, despite the questionable evidence. Everything that followed in France over the next three years sprang from the Clichy affair, as if a signal had been given: These events, but also the ongoing repression of the communards, which had continued from the time of the insurrection of the Paris Commune of 1871, animated Ravachol, and activated his thirst for retaliation, leading to the first two dynamite outrages of that era. Filled with indignation over these recent events, Ravachol and his band stole one hundred and twenty dynamite

cartridges from a contractor in Soisy-sous-Etiolles, south of Paris. Ravachol saw dynamite as a purer essence of struggle, more concentrated and intensified, than had ever before been employed. It was politics stripped of all its dearly beloved fictions, like ballot-boxes, political parties, demonstrations, and petitions—and it supplied anarchists with the means to defend themselves. Now suitably armed, Ravachol set his sights on representatives of the judiciary and placed bombs in the living quarters of the Advocate General Bulot (executive of the Public Ministry), and the councillor Benoit who presided over the Assises Court during the Clichy Affair. Both explosions resulted in several serious injuries, but no deaths.

One of Ravachol's character defects (of which there were many) was his vanity and as he sat down to a celebratory meal at the Very Restaurant, he vaingloriously boasted to the waiter about the Boulevard Saint Germain and Rue de Clinchy operations and extolled the virtues of anarchy. These naïve near-admissions prompted the law-respecting waiter—Jules L'herot—to rat him out to the police, and Ravachol was promptly arrested, along with his partners in crime. Like a wild animal emerging from the semi-literate backwoods of anarchism, the sudden astonishment of a creature such as Ravachol (a figure from an almost fantastical, medieval depth) propelled him overnight to a ghoulish, mythical stature in the popular mind. Ravachol's symbolically-rich personal saga inspired all manner of allegorical interpretations: Much was made of his illegitimate birth and his peasant origins, of his childlike simplicity, of how he reflected the flaws of the social system and was its inevitable product—and the press was sharply divided over whether he was an abused victim or a chilling sign of the times.

Ravachol was evidently possessed of great personal charisma, for as heinous as some of his earlier murders were, he had plenty of apologists. Here's how one of his closest friends later defended his murder of the Hermit: "Chivalrous to women, infinitely, pitifully loving to children, an honest, steady workman, a brave straggler against the unemployed difficulties, and, at last, a soldier against what he had bit by bit come to see as the root cause of his fellows' 'misery.' He hated no person. His throttling of the aged usurer was almost an accident. He meant to have his stolen money used for propaganda expenses. . . . The old chap surprised him at his appropriation and he stuffed his handkerchief into his mouth; and as he was ninety, he was too old to bear the gagging."

To some Ravachol personified Bakunin's ideal of an anarchist—"the devil in the flesh"—but to his admirers and imitators he was a seer, an oracle, a living myth who heralded the arrival of a new world and a new way of thinking. Jean Grave's moralistic publication *Revolte* was mortified by Ravachol's robberies and fiendish murders and stigmatized him as the apotheosis of evil, while other anarchist journals portrayed him as a bandit folk-hero and

saluted the “greatness of his character”. The Kropotkin camp clannishly set out to distance the prestige of “legitimate anarchism” from Ravachol’s uncultured, primitive revolt (Elise Reclus was one of the few major anarchist theoreticians who unequivocally supported Ravachol, writing that “I admire his courage, his kindness, his grandeur of soul, the generosity with which he pardons his enemies, in truth his denounciators. I know few men who surpass him in nobleness.”), while the storm-raising Emile Pouget helped create a bona-fide cult around Ravachol’s diabolical mystique. Charles Malato, in his series *Some Anarchist Portraits*, reflects on the problem Ravachol posed to the whole movement:

“The fight for and against Ravachol was a hot one; there were only a few of us who reserved our judgment till we had full knowledge of the facts of the case. Without denying the sensation produced by an individual act, which is often useful to propaganda, we never concealed from ourselves the fact that it far from sufficed to bring about a desirable transformation of society; we had quite different ideas from those of Ravachol as to the proper tactics to be pursued in the struggle. Still, we did not think we had the right to insult a man, however dubious his deeds might be, who seemed to have acted from conviction and disinterestedness, and who was about to pay the penalty with his head.”

At his first trial, the prosecuting attorney was, ironically, Bulot (the same man Ravachol had tried to kill a month earlier), who sought the most maleficent sentences possible for Ravachol and his 18-year old assistant, Charles “Cookie” Simon, whom he considered equally dangerous (two other accused members of Ravachol’s fraternity—Jus-Beala and Mariette Soubert—were acquitted). Ravachol and Simon got hard labor for life (Simon’s trials and tribulations were just beginning and he was killed two years later during a prison riot on Devil’s Island, French Guiana). Ravachol’s second trial concerned indictments related to his murder of the Hermit of Chambles. All investigative conjecture regarding this murder was dispelled by the scandalous confessions of Ravachol, which only seared his reputation as a small-time Mephistopholes into the eyes of Catholic France. In fact, Catholic France was devoutly loving this passion play, which presented both challenges and opportunities for anarchist proselytizing. How best to “spin” Ravachol and attribute a revolutionary message to his actions and his life? And what did solidarity really mean under such circumstances? Anarchist rehabilitation of his name proved unnecessary in the end, because the infamy and legend of Ravachol tapped into something deeper and more atavistic in the French psyche, something that lent a mythical dimension to a struggle desperate for epic, galvanizing precedents to ensure faith in the cause. “See this hand?” Ravachol shouted at his accusers in the courtroom. “It has killed as many bourgeois as it has fingers.” Statements like this got him the death sentence, but left a lasting impression on anarchists

invested in the “historic mission” of the Idea. The prison chaplain accompanied him on the way to the guillotine and pleaded with him to repent, at which point Ravachol became livid and savagely rejoined: “Take away your crucifix! If you show it to me again I’ll spit upon it!” Ravachol went to the guillotine insolent and unrepentant on July 11th, 1892, but anarchists clothed his execution in the glow of quasi-religious “sacrifice”—which brought him an ultimate glory over the State in death (Anatole Deibler, French executioner from 1885 to 1939, was responsible for the executions of Ravachol, Auguste Vaillant, Emile Henry, Sante Caserio, three members of the Bonnot Gang, and a total of 395 men. Executioners were considered a “blood trade” in France and they existed as a caste apart, with their families intermarrying).

Ravachol became one of anarchism’s most venerated martyrs and the colloquial verb, *ravacholizer* (to exact revenge; to vanquish one’s enemies) was even coined in his honor. Pictures of Ravachol were produced and distributed as if they were images of a saint, his deeds were celebrated in song, and lurid works of fiction with sensationalistic titles like “*Les Exploits de Ravachol*” and “*Les Amours de Ravachol*” were issued in penny illustrated numbers. *Museux*, in *L’Art Social* said: “Ravachol has remained what he at first showed himself, a rebel. He has made the sacrifice of his life for an idea and to cause that idea to pass from a dream into reality. He has recoiled before nothing, claiming the responsibility for his acts. He has been logical from one end to the other. He has given example of a fine character and indomitable energy, at the same time that he has summed up in himself the vague anger of the revolutionists.”

Ravachol combined into one symbol old legends of countryside brigands and new ideas of heresy, and the commotion caused by his appearance strengthened hysterical fears about an abominable underground conspiracy against law and order. In hindsight, the anarchist deification of Ravachol seems overblown, but lawmakers’ apprehension about a dynamite plot and “revenge pacts” contained a germ of validity: During his final interrogations, Ravachol fervidly refused to account to his inquisitors for the remaining cartridges that were stolen at Soisy-sous-Etiolles, and police knew that a considerable stock of dynamite had been hidden somewhere ...

Patterned Webs of Vendettas and Retaliations

“I have said that every act directed against society was good. I might have made a larger bomb and filled it with bullets instead of nails, but in the interest of propagandism it was better to wound many than to kill one. My act had thus a wider influence.”

—Auguste Vaillant

Auguste Vaillant (1861-1893) was the illegitimate son of a cop (who abandoned him at birth) and a domestic servant. His father, an abusive, alcoholic police bastard, refused Vaillant's mother any material support and young Auguste was left to fend for himself on the streets at the age of seven, begging or stealing in the struggle to survive. Institutionalized on and off for most of his childhood, Vaillant taught himself to read in a youth correctional facility and fed his appetite for knowledge on natural history, astronomy, and philosophy. Vaillant's ardor for learning was a guiding star that gravitationally steered him toward anarchist thought, which he ravenously digested, and soon he left for Argentina in the hope of securing land on which he could put into practice the anarchist theoretical principles he was most drawn to: cooperation, mutual aid, and voluntary association. But Vaillant had been conned by the Argentinian Immigration Board's hype, and instead of personal sovereignty and land of his own, he found himself left with nothing until he sold himself out to the local big landowners for starvation wages. Absorbed by the feudal patronage of a Count, Vaillant and other immigrant slaves were treated as privately-owned equipment, and when the Count sold his estates, the immigrants were thrown into the bargain. The English company that "bought" them started out their master-slave relationship by selling food to the "peons" at exorbitant prices. Not wanting to die of hunger, Vaillant and his fellow dupes staged an insurrection by storming the bakery, where Vaillant began handing out bread. Most of the rioters were softened by a few conciliatory gestures the Company was forced to make, but Vaillant decided to escape with some of his friends and went downriver on a raft, successfully evading the posse of military on the look-out for them.

Disillusioned and exasperated, Vaillant returned to Paris, but bad luck seemed to dog his footsteps, and when he found work at all, it was always at a starvation-level wage. He began to regard life in his society as a comedy of vain desires and striving, and calmly viewed the utter emptiness of all his endeavors. Disadvantageously positioned and enmeshed in a social web larger than himself—one seemingly determined to send him to the tomb hungry—Vaillant accepted his death, but not before he sent a message to the representatives of the social system that had cast him against his will into the role of victim. On December 9th, 1893, Vaillant went straight to the source and flung a homemade bomb (which he assembled by slow degrees, expending a few sous on it week by week) into the Chamber of Deputies, the fountainhead from which he felt all other "social injustice" flowed. A shower of nails rained on the Deputies and when the confusion had abated, it was discovered that about eighty politicians had been injured, most with superficial cuts. Vaillant was arrested on the spot and in response to the first question asked of him said, "Let the ministers and deputies know that there is a bomb of Damocles over their heads. I shall be followed by another, who shall succeed better than I have done"! Vaillant became a cause celebre due to the fact that Parliament

inspired very little sympathy among the public at the time; on the whole, the Deputies were despised and when it was learned that a bomb had been exploded within the walls of the Chamber, there was a common disposition to chuckle as soon as the shock wore off. The Prime Minister and his cabinet were quick to reply to Vaillant's attack and within 48-hours there were four bills being presented to the Chamber: one defining anarchists as criminals under common law, another restricting the commercial regulations with respect to explosives, a third aimed at suppressing the anarchist press, and a fourth that increased funding to the Paris police force. The politicians whose heads had been scratched by Vaillant's boot nails promptly adopted these measures, seven-eighths of the Chamber voting in their favor. Orders were also issued to the postal authorities to seize all suspicious correspondence, and detailed lists of anarchists (and of their friends or acquaintances who might be inclined to assist or harbor them) were prepared, and then 100 arrest warrants were issued, and put into execution on New Years Day.

Vaillant delivered a long soliloquy after his examination in court, in which he took a detached view on the puny and trivial importance of the proceedings (in a metaphysical sense):

"Ah! Gentlemen, how little a thing is your assembly and your verdict in the history of humanity; and human history in its turn is likewise a very little thing in the whirlwind which bears it through immensity and which is destined to disappear, or at least to be transformed, in order to begin again the same history and the same facts, a veritably perpetual play of cosmic forces renewing and transforming themselves forever."

Vaillant received the death sentence and a campaign was immediately launched to raise money for his daughter Sophie (which even the conservative organ *Le Figaro* supported), but Vaillant brought the matter to an end by appointing the anarchist writer Sebastian Faure as her guardian. Another campaign was initiated to commute his death sentence to life imprisonment, but French President Carnot refused to yield (a decision that would come back to haunt him) and on the morning of February 5th, Vaillant was led to the guillotine, by all accounts in perfect self-possession and with what some witnesses described as a "smile of ecstasy" on his face. Edouard Conte, a reporter present at his execution, gave the following account of Vaillant's final moments: "There is a simple majesty in this march to the rack. No, I have never seen a man look down upon other men from a loftier height. When within eight feet of the guillotine, Vaillant, like the cock that crows at day-break, hurled at society this malediction, "Death to bourgeoisie society! Vive l'Anarchie!". Vaillant's remains were conveyed to the cemetery of Ivry, south of Paris, and within 24-hours a card paying homage to him appeared on his grave bearing the words: "Glory to thee, I am only a child, but I will avenge thee", along with a large sign flaunting the following threatening lines, which

foreshadowed the events to come:

*Puisqu'ils ont fait boire à la terre
A l'heure du soleil naissant
Rosee auguste et salulaire
Les saintes gouttes de ton sang
Sous les feuilles de cette palme
Que t'offre le Droit outrage
Tu peux dormir d'un sommeil calme,
O Martyr, tu seras venge'!*

Demonstrations and vigils by anarchists at this “shrine” became a regular event and in February, the French state was even motivated to pass a law forbidding anyone from visiting Vaillant’s grave and police were stationed at the cemetery to see to it that the order was enforced. In March, the government went further and passed a bill forbidding the publication of reports of anarchist trials, arguing that the notoriety given to Ravachol and Vaillant by public trials and sentencing statements was the most powerful incentive to other anarchists to emulate their actions. It’s interesting to note that in France at that time, where the newspapers were written not by hacks, but by the foremost literary names of the country, opinions regarding the anarchist bombers were by no means unanimous and even bourgeois columnists approached the phenomenon with some degree of nuanced philosophy. Henry Fouquier, representing the moderate wing of the French Republicans, had this to say about Vaillant in *L’Echo de Paris*:

“Vaillant, while attributing his crimes to the absence of religious beliefs, maintained an admirable dignity. It is because the state of soul of the militant anarchist is historically analogous to that of the early Christians, whom it is customary to admire. The madness of the cross and the madness of the bomb resemble each other from many points of view. Christians and Anarchists, the former believers and exposing only themselves, the latter atheists and sacrificing others with themselves, are people whom social conditions oppress, or incite to rebellion, and who wish to bring about, by violence and destruction (for the Christians were terrible destroyers), a radical change in all things, without hoping, moreover, to personally benefit by this change.”

Another columnist from *Le Figaro* astutely predicted that “There is passing through the minds of our time something vague but powerful, over which force will not always prevail. Opinion is more disturbed at severity than astonished at indulgence. Vaillant’s blood may flow, and at the same time ripen bloody harvests. I mean to say further that this bloody affair is not so simple a matter as some seem to think, that it ends nothing, and that the headman’s axe has not solved the problem.” The fallout pattern from Vaillants unpopular execution started to manifest itself two weeks later when, in two different

Parisian districts, the local police received letters from a despondent individual warning of an impending suicide. The letters were signed “Etienne Rabardy”, but it was all merely a ruse to lure the police to two hotels—one in the faubourg Saint-Jacques and the other on rue Saint-Martin—where the doors were booby-trapped with bombs intending to kill the investigating officers. Both bombings were later attributed to the Belgian anarchist Amedee Pauwels (1864-1894), who was suspected of being a confederate of Emile Henry’s. Pauwels’ campaign came to an abrupt end on March 15th, when he entered the Church of the Madeleine (the site of many upper-class baptisms and marriages) carrying a bomb that went off prematurely. With his right hand blown off, Pauwels still managed to shoot himself in the head before police arrived on the scene. A picture of Ravachol, along with details of his execution, were found in his jacket.

Emile Henry (1872-1894)

“The act of Emile Henry, even though he is a highly intelligent and highly courageous anarchist, has, more than anything, been a blow to anarchy. It was savage to attack a collaborator who, even if it was a mistake, almost killed him. But I can’t help thinking that he could have done better. I approve all violence that targets the obstacle, that strikes at the enemy, not that strikes blindly. A crowd is unconscious, often even brutal and hateful, I know that very well, but whose fault is that? The masters who keep it in ignorance and secular submission. If we are really what we have always claimed to be, friends of the masses, and not neurotic decadents, we ought to be throwing at the crowd, which has the right to go a café, not dynamite but ideas.”

—Charles Malato

Emile Henry was born in 1872 in Spain, the son of an exiled Paris Commune who was condemned to death by the Versailles government in absentia for insurrection. Following the amnesty of the Communards in 1879, Emile’s father returned to France with the whole family, but he had mercury poisoning from working in Spanish copper mines and died when Emile was ten. Emile had a strong attachment to the memory of his deceased father, which probably contributed to his martyr-complex. Emile briefly considered himself a socialist, but left it behind in favor of anarchism after encountering anarchist critiques of socialism’s intrinsically statist nature. In 1892, Henry became a habitué of the spacious cellar room that served as the editorial office for Zo d’Axa’s *L’Endehors* and it was here that he befriended the proudly aloof anarchist art critic Felix Feneon. Feneon was very taken with the young Henry, admiring the “mathematical precision of his thinking” and the intense way in which he identified with the suffering of the poor while maintaining a cool and detached exterior. Emile assumed the role of Feneon’s protegee for a

short time, until his brother Fortune Henry—also an anarchist—ran afoul of the law and Emile saw at close quarters the powers of the State dangerously multiply. Fortune Henry was a gifted speaker and on May 28, 1892 he joined a large crowd of anarchists who disrupted a socialist meeting held before an election, shouting that workers should abstain from the electoral circus. When Fortune took the podium he saluted the theories of Ravachol and exclaimed “Death to those who govern! Death to the bourgeoisie!” He then appeared to wave a dynamite cartridge that he pulled from his pocket and yelled “Here are our weapons, what we need to blow up the bourgeoisie!” Unfortunately for Fortune, an informer was present taking notes and two days later police came looking for him, armed with a warrant. When the police searched his apartment they found five thousand copies of a brochure written by Fortune titled “Ravachol, an Anarchist? Absolutely!”—along with a fragment from an Italian newspaper containing instructions for making a bomb. Fortune was eventually apprehended and charged with “inciting murder and pillage” and his arrest seems to have plunged Emile into a cold delirium and propelled him in a more militant direction.

Emile’s orientation was staunchly anti-collectivist by now and some of his writings demonstrate him interacting with anarchist thought, not as an ideologue, but as an autonomous individual un-beholden to any dogma:

“Nevertheless, don’t think that anarchism is a dogma, a doctrine that can’t be attacked, indisputable, venerated by its followers as the Koran is by Muslims. No, the absolute freedom that we call for ceaselessly expands our ideas, raises them towards new horizons (following the will of diverse individuals) and removes them from the rigid frameworks of regimentation and codification. We are not “believers;” we don’t bow before Reclus or Kropotkin. We debate their ideas, we accept them when they develop sympathetic impressions in our brains, but we reject them when they don’t strike a chord within us.”

Had Emile Henry continued to play with these ideas freely he might have devised all manner of radical tactics, but the descent into dogmatic tunnel-vision and pure abstraction—once it started—was an accelerated one and before long he concluded that words and speeches weren’t enough and told his friend Charles Malato, “We should finish with those people who dishonor our party...those who wanted to use the pen instead of the bomb aimed to live comfortably in the bourgeois style”. The fire of the attentats was so constant and ferocious at this point that, on the strength of the theory of probability, Emile Henry’s own radicalization from idealist intellectual to bomber had a certain predestined quality to it. Around this time the miners in the south of France were on strike against low wages and lethal working conditions. Emile was disgusted with the company exploiting the miners and on November 8th 1892, he placed a bomb on the doorstep of the company’s office. Before it could kill any of the Company’s managers, the brown paper parcel was discovered

and unwrapped and taken to the local police station. A few minutes after its arrival, an incredible explosion spread the bodies of five cops over what remained of the police station.

But all this was just a prelude to Henry's coup de maître. On the morning of February 12, 1894, following a perversely logical, if extreme, train of thought, Emile made his way to the Café Terminus (a high-end restaurant), drank a cup of coffee, and surveyed the crowd. As he exited he turned around and flung a bomb from the doorway into the crowded café. There were one hundred and twenty bullets in the bomb Henry had constructed and when they flew in the explosion twenty people were seriously injured, one of whom later died. Henry was pursued by two policemen and when they got too close he pulled out his revolver and fired at them, but was eventually captured with the help of some good semaritans. Prompted by a desire to show that the anarchists could wreak vengeance and reprisals as well as the State, there was an emotionally-remote, contained madness to Henry's attack and an excessive faith in the nearness of the final victory. Endowed with a poetic aptitude, Henry's sentencing statement to the court is, by literary standards, an eloquent, impassioned sermon on the crushing poverty of the French class system, but it's also an exhibition of his fanaticism in all its disturbing starkness—and it's a little hard to view his lazy targeting of the Café Terminus as "heroic". In the spirit of proselytism, Henry (like Ravachol) spent his remaining weeks in prison trying to convert guards and prison staff to his creeds, predicting that two or three generations were all it would take "to save mankind from the influence of the artificial civilization to which it is subjected today. We must throw down this antiquated, rotten edifice. And that is what we are doing". On May 21, 1894, Emile Henry's life was terminated with a crashing but meaningless thud, as his head was lopped off by the enforcing blade of an unchanged society.

Santo Caserio (1873-1894)

Santo-Geronimo Caserio was born in Motta Visconti, Italy and was an avowed anarchist since the age of seventeen. At the age of eighteen Caserio was sentenced to a term of imprisonment for distributing anarchist tracts to Italian soldiers. He managed to escape and make his way to Switzerland, before finally basing himself in the dirty, working-class town of Cette, France—a port town that contained a formidable anarchist population. Incensed that Vaillant and Emile Henry had been guillotined by the French judicial system—and that President Sadi Carnot had not reprieved them—Caserio hatched an assassination plot. On the morning of June 23, 1894, Caserio deliberately picked a quarrel with his employer in order to secure instant dismissal and the payment of the wages due to him. Now in possession of about 25 francs,

he purchased a blade engraved with the word “Toledo” on its handle (Toledo is a city in Spain, famous in the 16th and 17th centuries for the excellence of its weapons) and “generations” engraved on the side of its blade. He intercepted President Carnot in Lyon, where he was on a speaking tour, and stabbed him to death in the chest. Anti-Italian sentiment was high in France at the time of Caserio’s regicide, so instead of celebrating Carnot’s death the “people” formed mobs and started smashing Italian shops, setting fire to Italian property, and violently attacking any random Italians they found. The riots continued the next day and spread to other towns, getting so bloodthirsty that over two thousand Italian workers fled France that week. At his trial, when the prosecution claimed they had evidence that he also wanted to kill both the king of Italy and the Pope, Caserio joked, “Not both at once...they never go out together.” Caserio had written a declaration to the court, which a translator read, but under a new law the Judge forbade its reproduction in the press and until now complete versions of it have been nearly impossible to find. The only other justification for Caserio’s act was contained in a letter to his mother from prison:

“Don’t think ill of me, dear mother. But think that if I committed this deed it was not because I have become a villain, though some people will tell you I am one...You know my goodness of heart. I still have that same heart today. If I committed this deed it was because I was weary of seeing a world so infamous.”

On August 16, 1894, the State took great precautions to guard the square in which Caserio’s execution was to take place. Three hundred police were strengthened by a battalion of the 98th Regiment. As the time for the execution drew near, a further security measure was taken as a squad of gendarmes circled the guillotine, but they proved to be a symbolic redundancy: Anarchist “leaders” (perplexingly treated as such by other anarchists!) like Kropotkin—whose diplomatic privileges in France were at stake—had started repudiating propaganda by deed and no “spontaneous uprising of the people” would be happening any time soon. Like his immediate predecessors, Caserio went down triumphantly shouting “Vive L’Anarchie!”

Lesser-Known Combatants

“If the revolver is the American language, dynamite henceforth will be the language of the French. To what purpose is discussion now? Have we not found the most convincing argument: the explosive?”

—La Dynamite, May Day, 1892

There were a number of other French anarchists who participated in this small-scale war of attrition who have only received fragmentary treatment in

studies of that era, but whose names deserve to be remembered. In 1886 there was the case of Charles Gallo who, in his own words, attempted to “accomplish an act of propaganda by the deed of the anarchist principles” by throwing a bottle of prussic acid from an upper gallery of the Paris stock exchange and shooting at the stampeding brokers while shouting “Vive l’Anarchie”! Gallo was sentenced to twenty years in a penal colony, where he soon died.

Georges Etiévant (born in 1865) was an anarchist and alleged associate of Ravachol who was sentenced to five years in prison for the theft of the dynamite used in Ravachol’s attacks. During his trial in the autumn of 1892, he appeared before the Assize Court of Versaille and drew up a declaration of anarchist-communist principles. The tribunal wouldn’t allow him to read it, whereupon the principal French organ of that tendency, *Le Revolte*, undertook the mission to publish his statement and took great pains to secure an absolutely correct copy of the original. The Declaration (which was published again in pamphlet form in 1893) made a sensation in the anarchist world, and even anarchist “literati” like Octave Mirbeau and Elise Reclus quoted from it with respect. After serving his sentence, Etiévant collaborated with the journal *Libertaire*, but following a seditious article entitled “The Rabbit and The Hunter” in issue no. 103, the French state sentenced him to three more years in prison in absentia. When the police came looking for him he was carrying a sword and revolver and fought back, slightly wounding one of the State’s thugs. Vindictively, he was given hard labor for life and sent to the penal colony in Cayenne, where he died a year later on February 6th, 1900.

On April 25, 1892, the day before the appearance of Ravachol in the Assises Court of Seine, a bomb exploded in the Restaurant Very, killing two people—including the landlord—and wounding several others. The Restaurant Very was where the waiter who turned Ravachol in to the authorities, Jules L’herot, was employed; the previous day, L’herot had received an anonymous letter in which it was said: “If Ravachol is condemned tomorrow remember that at the same hour you will be attacked by the engines of our vengeance.” The anarchist partisan Theodule Meunier was the perpetrator of that sympathetic detonation, as well as of the dynamite attack on the Caserne Lobau (infamous as the site of Communard massacres) on March 15th, 1892. French police finally arrested him in a safe house in London in June 1894 and he was sentenced to hard labor for life at the dreaded Cayenne penal colony (this prison would become a new theater of war for the anarchists interned there). While imprisoned he maintained a correspondence with Jean Grave, who published his writings in various journals. Meunier made several escape attempts from this infernal torture-realm, but finally died in Cayenne on July 25, 1907 (the guillotine utilized at Devil’s Island for ungovernable prisoners was said to be the identical instrument by which King Louis the 16th was put to death, having been sent there from France at the time of the Directory).

On November 12th, 1893, the young anarchist shoemaker, Leon-Jules Leauthier attacked and seriously injured the visiting Serbian Minister Georgewitch with his (shoemaker's) paring knife. Leauthier's attack drew praise in the pages of La Revue Anarchiste (the Montmartre anarchist journal with which Charles Chatel replaced the suppressed L'Endehors), where an anonymous writer mused:

"The act of this Leauthier is particularly sound: an immense beauty is revealed by the act in itself, from the conditions where it is elaborated and from the superb attitude of the avenger...I esteem it very beautiful and very useful. Very beautiful, because it is a striking demonstration of revolt and grows in the depths of the laboring classes, because it is courageously independent; very useful, because it will perhaps make those who possess reflect, and inspire in them the terror of reprisals."

In what was becoming a standard punishment for anarchists, Leauthier was sentenced to hard labor for life on 23rd February 1893 and shipped to the aforementioned Iles du Salut, situated off Cayenne, in what was French Guyana in South America. These three prison islands – of which Devil's Island is the most infamous – were reserved by the French authorities for hard cases, for repeated escapees and for political prisoners. In the course of time many anarchists, illegalists and former Communards were sent to these hell-holes—so many, in fact, that they began to organize as a "dual power" within the prison system (at which point the melee playing out in the streets of Paris assumed a new front). In September 1894 tensions reach a boiling point on the islands when a prison guard named Mosca killed the anarchist Francois Briens. Before Briens died he declared: "I die for anarchy, the anarchists will avenge me", a prophetic statement that eventually gave the prison officials the excuse they needed to start slaughtering anarchists.

As a show of force, on October 21st the same jailer, Mosca, was killed during his shift by anarchist conspirators, stabbed with a dagger along with 3 other guards judged accountable for Briens murder. A man hunt began, with no quarter given, and the next morning Charles "Cookie" Simon (also known as Biscuit and Ravachol II) was discovered hiding in a coconut tree, pronounced guilty of the deed and shot (a member of the St. Denis anarchist group, along with his comrade Ravachol, Simon had planted a bomb in the house of M. Benoit, the presiding judge at the trial of two anarchists, Dardare and Decamp, who had taken part in a May Day demonstration in Clichy Levallois in 1891). Five more anarchist prisoners - Marsevin, Lebault, Faugoux, Chevenet and Jules Leon Leauthier – were caught in the field of fire and shot down that bloody morning, holding each other's hands and crying "Vive la liberte, vive l'anarchie!" This provoked a rising of all the convicts, nearly 800 in number, and for a time the situation was desperate for the prison government, until they activated more troops and compliance was enforced in a death-rain of

bullets. The prison mutiny was crushed and makes for a tragic postscript to the whole era, but the attempt itself is illustrative of how anarchism became a rallying point of solidarity against the prison authorities—and not just among self-conscious anarchists. Many convicts who arrived at Cayenne as apolitical thieves, counterfeiters and social bandits converted to anarchism, both from a pragmatic spirit of revolt against common oppressors and because the adoption of anarchist views towards the State was seen as a transformation or “rebirth” from slave to free individual.

An interesting appendix to this paroxysm of anarchist violence occurred on February 15, 1894 when the 26-year old French anarchist Martial Bourdin attempted to blow up the Royal Observatory in London’s Greenwich Park, which was then a world class research observatory, the point of origin for global longitude and the location of the global meridian line that determined all time in the United Kingdom. Bourdin’s own timing was fatally botched, however, and his bomb detonated as he was walking through the park. The Park keeper on duty that afternoon was the first to arrive at the site of the explosion, discovering that Bourdin’s left hand had been blown off, with sinews and tendons hanging down out of the bloody stump. He had a massive wound in his stomach, out of which some of his intestines were spilling, and he had a hole under his right shoulder blade with bone protruding. The gathered witnesses took Bourdin to a hospital where he died twenty-five minutes later from shock and loss of blood. The questions of where Bourdin obtained his bomb have never been resolved. A recipe for a bomb, copied from a book in the British Museum, was found on his body, and further information about explosives (and a large stash of money) was discovered in the room where he lodged. Bourdin’s death was widely reported in the newspapers and is still cited as the first incident of “international terrorism” in Britain. Newspapers queried the wisdom of continuing to give foreign revolutionaries asylum in Britain, and the question was raised in the House of Commons as to whether the government might consider reversing its policy on immigration in the light of the incident.

The home secretary, Herbert Asquith, fearing that Bourdin’s funeral might be turned into an anarchist demonstration, gave orders that the police should prevent any procession from following the hearse and restrain anyone who attempted to make a speech at the graveside; none of these measures dissuaded the huge crowd of more than 1000 people who attended anyway (despite the notoriety he attained in that moment, Bourdin’s failed act remains an anticlimactic historical blip and his most lasting legacy was to have inspired Joseph Conrad’s anti-anarchist novel *The Secret Agent*).

Propaganda by the deed, as developed in France from the late 1870’s, appeared to many to provide a framework for action without compromising

anarchist opposition to organization and to point the direction of resolving the paradox of a non-authoritarian revolution. The scale of its appeal becomes clear when one considers that—beyond the more legendary attentats—there were a considerable number of political dynamiters whose explosions were not considered serious enough by law enforcement to warrant lasting investigations (In the Paris Police Archives there are still several boxes dealing with explosions in the 1880's and 1890's). In addition, there were numerous instances of threatening letters sent anonymously to property-owners, bosses and judges, warning them to expect an explosion and sometimes informing them that they should vacate the premises by such and such an hour (such missives were often signed with names like “the avengers of Ravachol” and “the compagnons of Ravachol”). The envenomed combativeness of the anarchists during this prolonged season of bloodshed ushered in a cycle of retaliation, not just from the State, but from outraged patriots—as anarchists themselves became the targets of “propaganda by deed” when a right-wing worker tried to assassinate Louise Michel.

The Attempt to Kill Louise Michel

On Sunday evening, January 22, 1888, just at the adjournment of a meeting which she had been addressing in the Gaiety Music Hall at Havre, Louise Michel, the emblematic heroine of the Paris Commune, was made the object of an assassin's (failed) attack. A man named Pierre Lucas, standing behind her, fired a revolver at her twice, the shots taking effect in her head. Fortunately the wounds inflicted, though serious, didn't endanger her life.

Michel's evening lecture at the Gaiety Hall was geared towards an under-class audience. “As long as she spoke,” the Petit Havrais, an establishment organ, was obliged to confess, “she commanded the attention of her hearers, who even listened with pleasure, we will say, so much art did she bring to the presentation of her theories under a humanitarian form, so many refinements did she use to avoid shocking the most prejudiced of her audience, and so many pleasing and poetical expressions did she employ.”

The meeting had just been adjourned, when the recontre and attempt upon her life was made. Hit by two balls, the courageous Michel stoically endured the emergency operation performed by the doctors that her friends had summoned to the scene. Seated at a table, she laid her head upon a napkin, while the physicians probed the wounds; according to biographers, the scratching of the steel upon the bone drew no sound of complaint from Louise, in spite of her atrocious suffering.

Pierre Lucas, the assailant, was thirty-two years old and formerly a clown in a circus, but at the time of his failed attentat on Michel he was employed

as a private watchman. On his examination before the prosecuting attorney he said that, in killing the queen of the Anarchists, he hoped to suppress the party, which, having lost its leader, would disappear!

Michel, in her characteristically magnanimous fashion, begged for mercy for her assailant, saying: "Have them let him go! He is a poor madman." She was adamant that she wanted no media sensation to be created regarding his act, and that no criminal charges be filed, but naturally, the Paris press was all over to situation.

The next day her physician had her taken to Paris, and a reporter from "L'Intransigeant" soon tracked her down to her small and scantily-furnished apartment at No. 9B Victor Hugo Street. On the wall of the front room hung a portrait of the Chicago martyrs. Louise Michel sat at a table, surrounded by a few comrades, her head bandaged in linen, and decided to give a press conference regarding the attack.

"But you have a bullet in your head," said the reporter. "You cannot remain in this condition."

"There will be time enough tomorrow. You pay much more attention to my wounds than I accord to them myself. Remember that I am not a woman, but a combatant. Let us talk of something else. But first I beg you to promise to help me to release from the hands of justice the unfortunate man who fired at me and whom I pity with all my heart... he is an unfortunate victim of hallucination, of whom the reactionists have made a tool. They have abused him. They knew that he was fond of drink. He was drunk when he fired the shots. Let him go in peace."

Upon the reporter's insistent pestering, Michel then told the following story of the previous evenings attack:

"The bourgeois meeting passed off quietly, the public listening attentively. From that meeting my friends and I went to Gaiety Music Hall for the evening meeting. We found more than two thousand men and women in the hall. Two fine meetings would have been too much for the reactionists. So in the interval between them they formed a conspiracy against us.

"And what have you to say about the attack?"

"That I like people who fire at me better than those who insult me at a distance. At least they have the frankness of their opinion. This Lucas excites my pity. He is a victim, not a guilty man. A victim of his temperament, vitiated by drink, and also a victim of the wretches who have abused his simplicity to incite him against me. He is simply a madman. It seems that, when aiming at me, he made the sign of the cross, as if Anti-Christ were before him. I intend

to return to Havre to testify in behalf of this irresponsible being... It appears that Lucas lived with his family in an attic, and that he earned barely enough to keep starvation from the door. That explains many things."

Fulminate of Mercury

Most historians consider the years 1880-1884 to be the general timeline for "propaganda by deed" in France, but even veritate the boundless wrath of the anarchists galloped headlong for another three decades: In June of 1897 a bomb was thrown at President Faure's carriage, but disappointingly, without the desired results (though no arrests were ever made in connection with the attempt) and in 1900 the Shah of Persia, on a visit to Paris, was threatened by an anarchist who pointed a revolver at the despot, while exclaiming "Death to all the sovereigns!". Before the assassin could fire, however, he was tackled and arrested (though he got off with a comparatively short term of imprisonment). Five years later, on May 31st, 1905, there was an anarchist-claimed bomb attack on the visiting Spanish King Alfonso in the Rue de Rohan. Alfonso and French President Loubet had just left the Paris Opera House when a bomb was thrown at the carriage they were driving. This attack is believed to have been orchestrated by Spanish anarchists operating on French soil (several anarchists were arrested on suspicion of being involved, but the case against them broke down and they were acquitted). And finally, one more tremendous flash occurred in 1919 when the obscure and largely forgotten anarchist Emile Cottin tried to snuff out French Premier Georges Clemenceau with a Browning revolver.

"One must warn them by terrible examples. The nihilists were right. One must strike the imagination first, and when they see men seize the hand of justice and undertake the struggle, alone against the multitude, against nations, when they see these struck by death, and then run joyously to the martyrdom of the guillotine, the people will begin to reflect. The time for discourse is past...Let individuals reveal themselves by acts."

—Paul Adam, 1895

The French attentats didn't arise without warning or seemingly out of nowhere. One of the factors clearly nourishing the whole phenomenon of "propaganda by deed" (aside from despair-inducing poverty) was the culturally-rooted strand of millenarian thought which runs through European and American history as a consistent theme. Millenarianism is a quest for an otherworldly, collective salvation—where the entire world is harmoniously united under a single law or "kingdom of god"—that emerged within the sphere of various religious sects. To the millenarian, history has its own predetermined course which is being carried to its completion, and the millenarian hopes and terminology of these fringe Christian sects were later secularized in anarchist

and socialist ideology; the same hopes remained, only now they were to be realized on earth through non-religious means, i.e., without the institutionalized church and clergy. In other words, the religious vision persevered while the expression of it changed with the times. Millenarian movements always seem to appear in periods of social tension or disintegration; these are the seasons when the millennial promises blaze and social messianic rhetoric flares, so it comes as no great surprise that anarchists—many of whom had deconstructed religion, but not religious idealism—would transform this intense expectation for a purification that would sweep away the old world, and usher in the society of natural harmony, into a revolutionary program. When anarchism became a Social Gospel it had something of the “advent” about it, turning out sweet, salvatory phrases and fire-and-brimstone battle cries by the bushels for the consumption of candy-minded “revolutionaries”. But this is merely the sad resurrection of religion in a new form, where The Ideal stands over each individual and exerts, like God, a psychological influence that fosters willing martyrdom. This form of anarchism, as a “quasi-religion”, naturally developed its own eschatology stressing an impending catastrophe of an extraordinary nature lying at the “end” of the long line of uniform history and the breaking off of its drab continuum.

The artist Charles Maurin’s iconic woodcut of Ravachol (which was first published in Emile Pouget’s *Almanach du pere Peinard*) drew cleverly from both popular and Christian sources—giving Ravachol a saintly stature as he stands steadfast before the guillotine, a field of grain, and the rising sun. In borrowing the grand and alluring symbols of the “Savior” from Christian iconography, manipulatively attempting to stir the deepest emotions and noblest feelings of their own flock, anarchist artists like Maurin only help expose how deeply Christianity has sunk its poisonous shaft into even the rebel imagination. In addition to the pictures of Ravachol that many anarchists carried in their pockets, police also reported an underground trade in Emile Henry’s artifacts, as if the objects contained talismanic power!

The veneration of anarchist martyrs as saints led to some decidedly bizarre and esoteric spiritualist offshoots, such as the cult of Universellism, which arose on the fringes of popular anarchism in the coastal city of Toulon in 1885. Founded by Marie de Saint-Remy (who claimed the “anarchist” Christ had appeared to her in prison), Universellism was obsessed with reincarnation and with astral communications with deceased political figures like Ravachol, Vaillant and Carnot (Marie de Saint-Remy also edited a loony Universellist publication called *Le Christ Anarchiste* from 1895 through 1897). This is obviously an extreme example of the tendency to transfer religious devotion to the political sphere, but it highlights the religious impulse running through so many movements focused on sweeping social reformation. Religion assumes many disguises and the Spook of Politics is often merely the stepchild

of religion—and the relative “purity” of anarchism as a political doctrine is probably its main attraction to those with latent or submerged religious temperaments. The tendency of extremes is to meet and resistance to domination can easily develop into a parody of itself.

During the 19th-century it was certainly a badge of honor to have participated in or supported “propaganda by deed”—and many of those who did so were proud adventurers or tragic romantics fighting with their backs against the wall—but as a magic potion or eschatological opiate martyrdom is condemned in advance to futility, and it would behoove anarchists to study this period with a critical eye. Holy wars, genocides, Holocausts, and all the great international massacres bear ample testimony to the hallucinatory faculty of the human mind and the numb stupidity of FAITH. The ideal of self-sacrifice for the “cause” may have had aesthetic value to the artists and writers connected with fin de siècle French anarchism (the martyr as a motive for a work of art or a novel lies in the fact that their theatrical gesture may appear beautiful to someone else), but beyond that it’s usually destitute of any other significance (the field of illegalism—which will be examined in a future pamphlet—would seem to offer more promising prospects for self-emancipation and empowerment). As far as fertile archeological research goes, however, the period of the French attentats was a high-water mark for anarchism as an oppositional culture—and it’s sadistically entertaining to boot!

The Forbidden Defense Speech of François Claudius Koenigstein, known as Ravachol [21 June 1892]

If I speak, it’s not to defend myself for the acts of which I’m accused, for it is society alone which is responsible, since by its organization it sets man in a continual struggle of one against the other. In fact, don’t we today see, in all classes and all positions, people who desire, I won’t say the death, because that doesn’t sound good, but the ill-fortune of their like, if they can gain advantages from this. For example, doesn’t a boss hope to see a competitor die? And don’t all businessmen reciprocally hope to be the only ones to enjoy the advantages that their occupations bring? In order to obtain employment, doesn’t the unemployed worker hope that for some reason or another someone who does have a job will be thrown out of his workplace? Well then, in a society where such events occur, there’s no reason to be surprised about the kind of acts for which I’m blamed, which are nothing but the logical consequence of the struggle for existence that men carry on who are obliged to use every means available in order to live. And since it’s every man for himself, isn’t he who is in need reduced to thinking: “Well, since that’s the way things are, when I’m hungry I have no reason to hesitate about using the means at my disposal, even at the risk of causing victims! Bosses, when they fire workers, do they

worry whether or not they're going to die of hunger? Do those who have a surplus worry if there are those who lack the basic necessities?"

There are some who give assistance, but they are powerless to relieve all those in need and who will either die prematurely because of privations of various kinds, or voluntarily by suicides of all kinds, in order to put an end to a miserable existence and to not have to put up with the rigors of hunger, with countless shames and humiliations, and who are without hope of ever seeing them end. Thus there are the Hayem and Souhain families, who killed their children so as not to see them suffer any longer, and all the women who, in fear of not being able to feed a child, don't hesitate to destroy in their wombs the fruit of their love.

And all these things happen in the midst of an abundance of all sorts of products. We could understand if these things happened in a country where products are rare, where there is famine. But in France, where abundance reigns, where butcher shops are loaded with meat, bakeries with bread, where clothing and shoes are piled up in stores, where there are unoccupied lodgings! How can anyone accept that everything is for the best in a society when the contrary can be seen so clearly? There are many people who will feel sorry for the victims, but who'll tell you they can't do anything about it. Let everyone scrape by as he can! What can he who lacks the necessities when he's working do when he loses his job? He has only to let himself die of hunger. Then they'll throw a few pious words on his corpse. This is what I wanted to leave to others. I preferred to make of myself a trafficker in contraband, a counterfeiter, a murderer and assassin. I could have begged, but it's degrading and cowardly and even punished by your laws, which make poverty a crime. If all those in need, instead of waiting took, wherever and by whatever means, the self-satisfied would understand perhaps a bit more quickly that it's dangerous to want to consecrate the existing social state, where worry is permanent and life threatened at every moment.

We will quickly understand that the anarchists are right when they say that in order to have moral and physical peace, the causes that give birth to crime and criminals must be destroyed. We won't achieve these goals in suppressing he who, rather than die a slow death caused by the privations he had and will have to put up with, without any hope of ever seeing them end, prefers, if he has the least bit of energy, to violently take that which can assure his well-being, even at the risk of death, which would only put an end to his sufferings.

So that is why I committed the acts of which I am accused, and which are nothing but the logical consequence of the barbaric state of a society which does nothing but increase the rigor of the laws that go after the effects, without ever touching the causes. It is said that you must be cruel to kill your like,

but those who say this don't see that you resolve to do this only to avoid the same fate.

In the same way you, messieurs members of the jury, will doubtless sentence me to death, because you think it is necessary, and that my death will be a source of satisfaction for you who hate to see human blood flow; but when you think it is useful to have it flow in order to ensure the security of your existence, you hesitate no more than I do, but with this difference: you do it without running any risk, while I, on the other hand, acted at the risk of my very life.

Well, messieurs, there are no more criminals to judge, but the causes of crime to destroy! In creating the articles of the Criminal Code, the legislators forgot that they didn't attack the causes, but only the effects, and so they don't in any way destroy crime. In truth, the causes continuing to exist, the effects will necessarily flow from them. There will always be criminals, for today you destroy one, but tomorrow ten will be born.

What, then, is needed? Destroy poverty, this seed of crime, in assuring to all the satisfaction of their needs! How difficult this is to realize! All that is needed is to establish society on a new basis, where all will be held in common and where each, producing according to his abilities and his strength, could consume according to his needs. Then and only then will we no longer see people like the hermit of Notre-Dame-de-Grace and others, begging for a metal whose victims and slaves they become! We will no longer see women give up their charms, like a common piece of merchandise, in exchange for this same metal that often prevents us from recognizing whether or not affection is sincere. We will no longer see men like Pranzini, Prado, Berland, Anastay and others who kill in order to have this same metal. This shows that the cause of all crimes is always the same, and you have to be foolish not to see this.

Yes, I repeat it: it is society that makes criminals and you, jury members, instead of striking you should use your intelligence and your strength to transform society. In one fell swoop you'll suppress all crime. And your work, in attacking causes, will be greater and more fruitful than your justice, which belittles itself in punishing its effects.

I am nothing but an uneducated worker; but because I have lived the life of the poor, I feel more than a rich bourgeois the iniquity of your repressive laws. What gives you the right to kill or lock up a man who, put on earth with the need to live, found himself obliged to take that which he lacks in order to feed himself?

I worked to live and to provide for my family; as long as neither I nor my

family suffered too much, I remained what you call honest. Then work became scarce, and with unemployment came hunger. It is only then that the great law of nature, that imperious voice that accepts no reply, the instinct of preservation, forced me to commit some of the crimes and misdemeanors of which I am accused and which I admit I am the author of.

Judge me, messieurs of the jury, but if you have understood me, while judging me judge all the unfortunate who poverty, combined with natural pride, made criminals, and who wealth or ease would have made honest men.

An intelligent society would have made of them men like any other!

Historical Note: Ravachol's declaration was first published in Emile Pouget's insurrectionary class-war journal *Pere Peinard*.

The Little Ravachols Will Grow Up

By Gustave Mathieu

(Translated by Mitch Abiddor)

(An article by Gustave Mathieu, a friend and accomplice of the anarchist hero, written shortly before Ravachol's execution in 1892.)

After all the misadventures of the policemen trailing me and the reporters pursuing me, and in memory of the interest they've always shown me, I perhaps owe them an update.

This is an occasion for me to offer my fraternal hand to the friend that I haven't forgotten.

If I'm writing these lines it's not to try to defend Ravachol as a martyr: in the cause for which we fight — sincere, convinced, and without pause — there are no martyrs. Rather than wasting away in a capitalist prison camp, sweating, toiling in order to enrich the exploiters, succumbing to privations and poorly-paid work, isn't it better to act as a revolutionary?

Can it be said that Ravachol wasn't called upon to know this sad existence? On the contrary, from an early age he had to work to bring a meager mouthful to his brothers and sisters, brought up in poverty by a mother who had remained a widow.

Of a sickly temperament, and seeing that despite working like a slave his family's poverty only got worse, he reflected...and he said to himself that rather than suffer like a resigned slave it would be better to take their stolen riches from the exploiters.

He often said: No luxury, only what is necessary. Enough of this life of flabbiness and moral degradation. Dignity, courage and, at the risk of our own lives, let us kill all the exploiters of the world.

Alas, the results of individual propaganda are paid for in a terrible way.

Which is what happened to my friend.

Ravachol bore his head high in front of the lackeys of the magistracy, taking responsibility for his acts, declaring that in our sad society the life of the workers is a hell.

How ironic it is to give all your strength when you're young and to see yourself everywhere rejected when you're old!

You have no right to call yourself an anarchist. You're nothing but a murderer, the cloaked ones answered.

And what are you, you who judge?

The fences of bandits who starve the poor, and of the Lavassiès of all the Comptoirs d'escompte; repulsive beings who approve the idleness of rich playboys and the shooting down of workers, like those of Fourmies, beggars who disturb your digestion. This is what you call order. So be it. You are playing your role, you have force behind you, and, taking advantage of this, you condemned Ravachol to death.

Perhaps you think that, like in the Anstay case, we're going to call for an autopsy of our friend in order to prove that he wasn't responsible for his acts. Not at all! Ravachol had a healthy mind and a proud heart when he took wherever he found it the money he needed to live, money useful for propaganda: the hermit of Chambles made possible the rue de Clichy. Ravachol's entire existence followed the logic of the rebel.

And you can kill him, but you'll never be able to stifle the voice of the rebels: the little Ravachols will grow up. You can do what you want, but they'll be more skillful and terrible than their predecessor.

Furthermore, the execution will be a challenge thrown at the anarchists, a challenge that will fall into good hands. The bourgeois press can slander as much as it wants, invent incredible lies, like the kidnapping of the bourgeois Deibler. Let it beware that reality one day may go beyond its predictions.

The squealer Véry, who was so carefully guarded, better even than Deibler now is, nevertheless paid for his denunciation.

If Deibler hasn't yet thought about retiring, I think for his own safety it

would be prudent to impose it on him.

— First Published: L'Endehors, No. 61, July 3, 1892

Today or Tomorrow.
By Louise Michel

Everything is good which strikes or stings.¹

So much the better if these bandits have finished their work. The scaffold has started the party, and the fire will beat its wings over the apotheosis.

The blood of Ravachol splashes, from his false collar to his cuffs, the cold man of the Élysée.

The Élysée! That's the spot that draws the looks! From it the grand finale, the final bouquet will rise into the air, and the cross of Our Lady of the Slaughter will be the streetlamp.

The sun has risen red in the prologue, and red it will set.

Yes, so much the better. It is necessary that this be finished, that we plow these accursed institutions like a field, in order to dry up the blood.

Let the slaves, more debased than ever, shout some Marseillaises. An instant is enough to change these docile dogs into wolves, and the winds blow liberty.

Pompeii danced when Vesuvius opened.

The trails of blood left by Deibler from one city to another indicate the road of the executioners, all the way to Montbrison where they slaughtered the dynamiter, the rebel, the anarchist who sang at the guillotine.

That is what is truly beautiful, the vision of those who die for justice; on the hideous trunk of the gallows, on the block, their necks clasped by the garrote or engaged in the infamous half-moon of the scaffold, they show that they are equal to the punishment that is offered by singing through the ordeal.

In the luminous bay that cuts into the night of death, isn't there beyond the free unknown, the taking possession of the world by humanity, the new dawn illuminating new times;

Like a magnet, limitless progress attracting men from ideal to ideal, as if from milestone to milestone, towards the future;

[1] The line appears in Zo d'Axa's article, "14 juillet sanglant," L'Endehors N°62, 10 juillet 1892

On the earth washed as after the rainstorms, an intense life germinating on the buried past;

Some still uncertain dawns covering in the infinite distance, some eras of harmony, science and love which, glimpsed, are worth eternity; isn't that enough to reason laugh at the torments?

It is fortunate that under the current circumstances pity is cowardly, or we would always have them.

It is better this way. They have wished for it. The merciless verdicts demand as a response: Everything is good that strikes or stings!

The crumbs thrown to the crowd in these provocative celebrations are covered with Ravachol's blood; in this way, on the nights of the hunt, they throw to the dogs bread soaked in the blood of the quarry.

He, dreaming of the happiness of all, has passionately thrown his life in the faces of the executioners.

So much the better if the anger mounts. The intensity of the battle will be short; there will be no more small means, no more foolish qualms!

The Deiblers of the Élysée, by the way, will prevent nothing. Let it be in just a little while or tomorrow, what does it matter!

When so many implacable wills have the same aim, so many convinced men have the same untiring patience, the same scorn for death, then the moment is imminent.

Each one, doing their work in their turn, will be worth a thousand, and the little Ravachols will not have time to grow much before the deliverance.

The streets, by then, will no longer be changed into slaughterhouses. It is the slaughterhouses which will be blown up.

It is not with wishes that the man of the stone age seized the cavern where the big cats peacefully devoured their prey.

Let each, like Ravachol, act according to his conscience, deploring the unwitting victims without letting themselves be diminished by hesitation; it is a lofty thought: the deliverance of the world.

Salute to the next flash of lightning thundering over the palaces, to the immense blaze that will end the orgy!

Nothing gives more to the struggle than the torture of a proud, brave

man—it is no longer the time to cry for the dead; they must be avenged—this time it will be vengeance for all and always.

This is the battle without mercy where the lost children of liberty offer themselves joyfully.

---L'Endehors, No. 63, 17 juillet 1892.

[Working translation by Shawn P. Wilbur ; revised July 26, 2013.]

The Spot of Oil: On the Execution of Vaillant By Severine

This oil is henceforth terribly mixed with blood, and with a blood which the most pitiless, among the intelligent, did not wish to see flow. None but the brutes, the narrow, short-sighted people, whose horizon is limited to anxiety for the person, or else the politicians, blinded by pride, who imagine their power immutable and the present system invincible, -- none but these talked lightly of the scaffold.

That part of the country where I live is certainly frequented by the pick of the implacable persons who spend their lives in the pursuit of pleasure. They are no worse than others; only they love themselves, and nobody but themselves, and would sacrifice half of humanity to their petty satisfactions.

Which, however, does not prevent charity festivals, -- for one is a snob or one is not!

A matter of atavism, education, habit! Fallow brains, uncultivated souls, poor soil, sterilized by the flinty hearts of the fathers and prevented from welcoming the good seed sometimes brought by the wind on the wings of chance. We must say of them to the poor what Christ said to God of his executioners: "Forgive them, for they know not what they do!" And we must not be too greatly astonished if the poor turn a deaf ear toward these favored persons who show so little compassion for those who share their ignorance without sharing their good fortune.

But philosophy is a luxury, hardly within the reach of the miserable. And when we see those who have everything failing to understand the exasperation of those who have nothing, of those who have had neither breeding nor education, whose infancy has been neglected, whose childhood has been roving, whose youth has been horrible; when we see the fortunate holding responsible for their abandonment the very ones who have been the victims thereof, and punishing them for it, -- it would really be asking of the latter super-human virtues to require of them an indulgence so far from reciprocal.

So the hatred goes on fermenting, as well as the impossibility of forgiving it.

It was interesting to note the impression made upon this blasé and hostile public by the news of the execution. All the afternoon I discreetly hovered about the bulletin-boards, expecting to hear cries of “Bravo!” or “So much the better!” or “It is no pity!” – the usual vocabulary of forced approval.

But nothing of the kind. To my great surprise most lips remained sealed; most brows were lined with a meditative wrinkle. Some women even – and by no means “comrades”, I assure you, – gave a shudder of repugnance, uttered a word of pity. A few distinguished-looking men spoke decidedly of the useless cruelty of the delay between the verdict and the punishment, of the cynicism of this decapitation in the midst of the carnival.

Only a fat banker with a goatish head was found to scream his joy, and the people about him shrank away, so shocking was this joy even to the least sensitive.

There hung over the great cosmopolitan bazaar, over the market of all greeds, a bewildered apprehension, – the idea that this end was a beginning.

They are not mistaken. I fear it more than I desire it, so far, at least, as reprisals are concerned, for, as for the social edifice, it may go to pieces and I wear no mourning; too often have I scrutinized the cracks, seen the swarming of the vermin, heard the scampering of the rats! He who can lodge comfortably in such a building cannot be fastidious.

But what astounds me is the way in which those who boast of its charms and sanitary qualities, who declare that there will never be a better or more beautiful structure, and that it only needs repapering, – what astounds me, I say, is the way in which those entrusted with the maintenance of the edifice go to work to preserve it.

It is unaccountable. With their own hands they sap and sap the already trembling foundations, disjoint the corners, shake the partitions, and then declare in a threatening, Olympian fashion that whoever shall make an assault upon the solidarity of the temple will be punished with imprisonment or death.

It is pretty, this temple! And fine people, its occupants!

But what shades, then, are falling from heaven upon these people, what veil, what bandage, obstructs their vision, hides from them the evidence, that they are so obstinate in not seeing it, in denying it, in marching superbly – at least they think so – toward the abyss which must swallow them up, and so many others with them?

This is no partial judgment; I do not aim at paradox; I no more take bladders for lanterns than my desires for realities. The fate of the world, thank heaven! is not in my hands; and what I may say or not say has no influence of any sort (on this point no mirage disturbs my brain) on the destinies of humanity.

Then why do I persist in repeating these things? What advantage do I gain thereby? What can it bring, except the disgrace, disfavor, malice of a power which, though far from being the incarnation of love, does not intend to be trifled with?

To achieve popularity? But what is the use? I am not even a voter, and, though I were, how many names I would scratch from my ballot rather than cast it! Besides I have too much mingled with the crowds to solicit their favor and picked up too many of the conquered who lay with broken bones at the foot of the Tarpeian rock, after ascending the steps of the Capitol the day before amid the delirium of the multitude.

Then, if it be not interest or ambition or desire for apotheosis, what is it that impels me unless a sincere, tenacious, absolute conviction? To play the role of Cassandra, as I have said before, is not a particularly pleasing sport; it is even a burden which one would willingly decline if it were a matter of free will; if, monstrosity, chalice living shrine, one were not the insignificant receptacle of a truth.

These are tall words for our frivolous epoch, and I would willingly be the first to cry out to the pug-nosed pythoness that I am: "Descend from your tripod, pretender!"

But, should I descend from my tripod today, I should have to stain my sandals in a pool of blood, -- the broad pool made by Deibler on the pavements of la Roquette. Splash about in it who will, -- masks and dominoes deepening in it the red of their costumes, magistrates dipping in it their purple, soldiers, poor soldiers, dyeing in it their uniforms!

For myself, I remain on my height, perhaps a little ridiculous, but not bespattered by this bloody dew.

And I see plainly, not by the soul's divination, but with my very eyes, the spreading, growing spot, invading the old world. Only kindness and fraternity could have stopped it, and these are scornfully rejected.

It is the duel, the death-struggle of a regime against the Idea, of Jacob with the angel. And those who hold our destinies in their hands go blundering on, bent upon letting loose the hurricane.

Count their stupidities, note their errors: the liberty to think disputed, opinion becoming an offence; the liberty to write restricted, even mutilated; the “guilty” arrested and held under lock and key for thirty or forty days at the good pleasure of the courts, and then released because innocent, with no further reparation than the advice “not to be seen here again”; the “suspects” under the eye of the police like malefactors, their correspondence examined and the slightest acts observed; Merigeau, who loudly proclaimed his opposition to propaganda by deed and who has a perfectly clean record, sentenced to three years in prison; Vaillant, who killed nobody, guillotined!

Look, look at the spreading spot, which all the waters of the sea and all the perfumes of Arabia will not succeed in wiping out.

Émile Henry's Defense

It is not a defense that I present to you. I am not in any way seeking to escape the reprisals of the society I have attacked. Besides, I acknowledge only one tribunal — myself, and the verdict of any other is meaningless to me. I wish merely to give you an explanation of my acts and to tell you how I was led to perform them.

I have been an anarchist for only a short time. It was as recently as the middle of the year 1891 that I entered the revolutionary movement. Up to that time, I had lived in circles entirely imbued with current morality. I had been accustomed to respect and even to love the principles of fatherland and family, of authority and property.

For teachers in the present generation too often forget one thing; it is that life, with its struggles and defeats, its injustices and iniquities, takes upon itself indiscreetly to open the eyes of the ignorant to reality. This happened to me, as it happens to everyone. I had been told that life was easy, that it was wide open to those who were intelligent and energetic; experience showed me that only the cynical and the servile were able to secure good seats at the banquet. I had been told that our social institutions were founded on justice and equality; I observed all around me nothing but lies and impostures.

Each day I shed an illusion. Everywhere I went, I witnessed the same miseries among some, and the same joys among others. I was not slow to understand that the grand words I had been taught to venerate: honour, devotion, duty, were only the mask that concealed the most shameful basenesses.

The manufacturer who created a colossal fortune out of the toil of workers who lacked everything was an honest gentleman. The deputy and the minister, their hands ever open for bribes, were devoted to the public good. The officer who experimented with a new type of rifle on children of seven

had done his duty, and, openly in parliament, the president of the council congratulated him! Everything I saw revolted me, and my intelligence was attracted by criticism of the existing social organization. Such criticism has been made too often for me to repeat it. It is enough to say that I became the enemy of a society that I judged to be criminal.

Drawn at first to socialism, I was not slow in separating myself from that party. I have too much love of freedom, too much respect for individual initiative, too much repugnance for military organization, to assume a number in the ordered army of the fourth estate. Besides, I realized that basically socialism changes nothing in the existing order. It maintains the principle of authority, and, whatever self-styled free-thinkers may say about it, that principle is no more than the antiquated survival of faith in a superior power.

Scientific studies gradually made me aware of the play of natural forces in the universe. I became materialist and atheist; I came to realize that modern science discards the hypothesis of God, of which it has no need. In the same way, religious and authoritarian morality, which are based on false assumptions, should be allowed to disappear. What then, I asked myself, was the new morality in harmony with the laws of nature that might regenerate the old world and give birth to a happy humanity?

It was at this moment that I came into contact with a group of anarchist comrades whom I consider, even today, among the best I have ever known. The character of these men immediately captivated me. I discerned in them a great sincerity, a total frankness, a searching distrust of all prejudices, and I wanted to understand the idea that produced men so different from anyone I had encountered up to that point.

The idea — as soon as I embraced it — found in my mind a soil completely prepared by observation and personal reflection to receive it. It merely gave precision to what already existed there in vague and wavering form. In my turn I became an anarchist.

I do not need to develop on this occasion the whole theory of anarchism. I merely wish to emphasize its revolutionary aspect, the destructive and negative aspect that brings me here before you.

At this moment of embittered struggle between the middle class and its enemies, I am almost tempted to say, with Souvarine in *Germinal*: 'All discussions about the future are criminal, since they hinder pure and simple destruction and slow down the march of the revolution...'

I brought with me into the struggle a profound hatred which every day was renewed by the spectacle of this society where everything is base, everything is equivocal, everything is ugly, where everything is an impediment to

the outflow of human passions, to the generous impulses of the heart, to the free flight of thought.

I wanted to strike as strongly and as justly as I could. Let us start then with the first attempt I made, the explosion in the Rue des Bon-Enfants. I had followed closely the events at Carmaux. The first news of the strike had filled me with joy. The miners seemed at last to have abandoned those useless pacific strikes in which the trusting worker patiently waits for his few francs to triumph over the company's millions. They seemed to have entered on a way of violence which manifested itself resolutely on the 15th August 1892. The offices and buildings of the mine were invaded by a crowd of people tired of suffering without reprisals; justice was about to be wrought on the engineer whom his workers so deeply hated, when the timorous ones chose to interfere.

Who were these men? The same who cause the miscarriage of all revolutionary movements because they fear that the people, once they act freely, will no longer obey their voices; those who persuade thousands of men to endure privations month after month so as to beat the drum over their sufferings and create for themselves a popularity that will put them into office: such men — I mean the socialist leaders — in fact assumed the leadership of the strike movement.

Immediately a wave of glib gentlemen appeared in the region; they put themselves entirely at the disposition of the struggle, organized subscriptions, arranged conferences and appealed on all sides for funds. The miners surrendered all initiative into their hands, and what happened, everyone knows.

The strike went on and on, and the miners established the most intimate acquaintance with hunger, which became their habitual companion; they used up the tiny reserve fund of their syndicate and of the other organizations which came to their help, and then, at the end of two months, they returned crestfallen to their pit, more wretched than ever before. It would have been so simple in the beginning to have attacked the Company in its only sensitive spot, the financial one; to have burnt the stocks of coal, to have broken the mining machines, to have demolished the drainage pumps.

Then, certainly, the Company would have very soon capitulated. But the great pontiffs of socialism would not allow such procedures because they are anarchist procedures. At such games one runs the risk of prison and — who knows? — perhaps one of those bullets that performed so miraculously at Fourmies? That is not the way to win seats on municipal councils or in legislatures. In brief, having been momentarily troubled, order reigned once again at the Carmaux.

More powerful than ever, the Company continued its exploitation, and the

gentlemen shareholders congratulated themselves on the happy outcome of the strike. Their dividends would be even more pleasant to gather in.

It was then that I decided to intrude among that concert of happy tones a voice the bourgeois had already heard but which they thought had died with Ravachol: the voice of dynamite.

I wanted to show the bourgeoisie that henceforward their pleasures would not be untouched, that their insolent triumphs would be disturbed, that their golden calf would rock violently on its pedestal until the final shock that would cast it down among filth and blood.

At the same time I wanted to make the miners understand that there is only one category of men, the anarchists, who sincerely resent their sufferings and are willing to avenge them. Such men do not sit in parliament like Monsieur Guesde and his associates, but they march to the guillotine.

So I prepared a bomb. At one stage the accusation that had been thrown at Ravachol came to my memory. What about the innocent victims? I soon resolved that question. The building where the Carmaux Company had its offices was inhabited only by the bourgeois; hence there would be no innocent victims. The whole of the bourgeoisie lives by the exploitation of the unfortunate, and should expiate its crimes together. So it was with absolute confidence in the legitimacy of my deed that I left my bomb before the door to the Company's offices.

I have already explained my hope, in case my device was discovered before it exploded, that it would go off in the police station, where those it harmed would still be my enemies. Such were the motives that led me to commit the first attempt of which I have been accused.

Let us go on to the second incident, of the Cafe Terminus. I had returned to Paris at the time of the Vaillant affair, and I witnessed the frightful repression that followed the explosion at the Palais-Bourbon. I saw the draconian measures which the government decided to take against the anarchists. Everywhere there were spies, and searches, and arrests. A crowd of individuals were indiscriminately rounded up, torn from their families, and thrown into prison. Nobody was concerned about what happened to the wives and children of these comrades while they remained in jail.

The anarchist was no longer regarded as a man, but as a wild beast to be hunted everywhere while the bourgeois Press, which is the vile slave of authority, loudly demands his extermination.

At the same time, libertarian papers and pamphlets were seized and the right of meeting was abrogated. Worse than that: when it seemed desirable

to get one comrade completely out of the way, an informer came and left in his room a packet which he said contained tannin; the next day a search was made, on a warrant dated the previous day, a box of suspicious powders was found, the comrade was taken to court and sentenced to three years in gaol. If you wish to know the truth of that, ask the wretched spy who found his way into the home of comrade Merigeaud!

But all such procedures were good because they struck at an enemy who had spread fear, and those who had trembled wanted to display their courage. As the crown of that crusade against the heretics, we heard M. Reynal, Minister of the Interior, declare in the Chamber of Deputies that the measures taken by the government had thrown terror into the camp of the anarchists. But that was not yet enough. A man who had killed nobody was condemned to death. It was necessary to appear brave right to the end, and one fine morning he was guillotined.

But, gentlemen of the bourgeoisie, you have reckoned a little too much without your host. You arrested hundreds of men and women, you violated scores of homes, but still outside the prison walls there were men unknown to you who watched from the shadows as you hunted the anarchists, and waited only for the moment that would be favorable for them in their turn to hunt the hunters.

Reynal's words were a challenge thrown before the anarchists. The gauntlet was taken up. The bomb in the Cafe Terminus is the answer to all your violations of freedom, to your arrests, to your searches, to your laws against the Press, to your mass deportations, to your guillotining. But why, you ask, attack those peaceful cafe guests, who sat listening to music and who, no doubt, were neither judges nor deputies nor bureaucrats? Why? It is very simple. The bourgeoisie did not distinguish among the anarchists. Vaillant, a man on his own, threw a bomb; nine-tenths of the comrades did not even know him. But that meant nothing; the persecution was a mass one, and anyone with the slightest anarchist links was hunted down. And since you hold a whole party responsible for the actions of a single man, and strike indiscriminately, we also strike indiscriminately.

Perhaps we should attack only the deputies who make laws against us, the judges who apply those laws, the police who arrest us? I do not agree. These men are only instruments. They do not act in their own name. Their functions were instituted by the bourgeoisie for its own defence. They are more guilty than the rest of you. Those good bourgeois who hold no office but who reap their dividends and live idly on the profits of the workers' toil, they also must take their share in the reprisals. And not only they, but all those who are satisfied with the existing order, who applaud the acts of government and so become its accomplices, those clerks earning three or five hundred francs

a month who hate the people even more violently than the rich, that stupid and pretentious mass of folk who always choose the strongest side — in other words, the daily clientele of Terminus and the other great cafes!

That is why I struck at random and did not choose my victims! The bourgeoisie must be brought to understand that those who have suffered are tired at last of their sufferings; they are showing their teeth and they will strike all the more brutally if you are brutal with them. They have no respect for human life, because the bourgeoisie themselves have shown they have no care for it. It is not for the assassins who were responsible for the bloody week and for Fourmies to regard others as assassins.

We will not spare the women and children of the bourgeois, for the women and children of those we love have not been spared. Must we not count among the innocent victims those children who die slowly of anaemia in the slums because bread is scarce in their houses; those women who grow pale in your workshops, working to earn forty sous a day and fortunate when poverty does not force them into prostitution; those old men whom you have made into production machines all their lives and whom you cast on to the waste heap or into the workhouse when their strength has worn away?

At least have the courage of your crimes, gentlemen of the bourgeoisie, and grant that our reprisals are completely legitimate.

Of course, I am under no illusions. I know my deeds will not yet be understood by the masses who are unprepared for them. Even among the workers, for whom I have fought, there will be many, misled by your newspapers, who will regard me as their enemy. But that does not matter. I am not concerned with anyone's judgement. Nor am I ignorant of the fact that there are individuals claiming to be anarchists who hasten to disclaim any solidarity with the propagandists of the deed. They seek to establish a subtle distinction between the theoreticians and the terrorists. Too cowardly to risk their own lives, they deny those who act. But the influence they pretend to wield over the revolutionary movement is nil. Today the field is open to action, without weakness or retreat.

Alexander Herzen, the Russian revolutionary, once said: 'Of two things one must be chosen: to condemn and march forward, or to pardon and turn back half way.' We intend neither to pardon nor to turn back, and we shall always march forward until the revolution, which is the goal of our efforts, finally arrives to crown our work with the creation of a free world.

In that pitiless war which we have declared on the bourgeoisie, we ask for no pity. We give death, and we know how to endure it. So it is with indifference that I await your verdict. I know that my head is not the last you will

cut off; yet others will fall, for the starving are beginning to know the way to your great cafes and restaurants, to the Terminus and Foyot. You will add other names to the bloody list of our dead.

You have hanged in Chicago, decapitated in Germany, garroted in Jerez, shot in Barcelona, guillotined in Montbrison and Paris, but what you will never destroy is anarchy. Its roots are too deep. It is born in the heart of a society that is rotting and falling apart. It is a violent reaction against the established order. It represents all the egalitarian and libertarian aspirations that strike out against authority. It is everywhere, which makes it impossible to contain. It will end by killing you.

--Emile Henry April 1894

The Hare and the Hunter

When, among the little phalange who bear their hearts high, and whom the idea of liberty has touched with its wing, one is found who, thanks to individual circumstances, feels at a given moment tremble within them with a lively energy the sentiments of human dignity rebelling against the cowardice imposed by society on the individual; when rid of the age-old prejudices from a contemptible education which give to me the idolatry of strength and success, one of them rises up threatening against power and wealth; when finally weary of being implicitly an accomplice of the iniquities, he strikes at the head or at the belly of the social body; and when separating from those who perform or support these iniquities, he haughtily casts, like a bloody challenge, his head at society, then the careless, spineless crowd, forced to think, barks stupidly.

Each time that one of these great rebels, feeling the magma of final wrath seethe within them, has struck those who represent Authority, the sheepish herd of the proletarians works to sustain it, and joining the chorus with its masters and educators, has almost always cast the anathema on him.

The recent execution of Canovas¹ has provoked this phenomenon. The unconscious multitude whose intellect remains stuck in the inextricable lakes of morality and cannot free itself from ancestral instincts, has once again reeled off the platitudes used in such cases.

To hear them, the anarchists are monsters, who without regard for positions, ages, or sexes, strike at random the "innocent" and the "guilty."

We are commonly accused of not respecting the neutrality of those who do not want to take part in the age-old quarrel between liberty and authority.

But who do you call innocent? What do you mean by neutrality?

What! You, voters, slavish souls who feel the need of fetters and chains, and not content to choose masters for yourselves, claim to impose them on us, you are innocent and neutral?

If you renounce your rights, your liberty, your happiness, so be it; but if, not content to be wretched and unhappy, you claim to oblige us to be equally so, do not say to us that you are neutral!

And all you taxpayers who pay informers who spy on us, the police and gendarmes who stop us, the judges who condemn us, the executioner who executes us, is that neutrality? What? You bribe people to rob us of our life and liberty, and you say that you are innocents?

I know well that you will perhaps say that the Government forces you to pay taxes. But then if you want to be able to plead your neutrality, why don't you enforce that neutrality on the Government?

The Government does not hear that one is neutral. It pitilessly strikes those who do not want to support it, and if we sometimes do as much, why condemn us and absolve it?

You must be for us or against us, for liberty or for authority, and if you choose the latter party as you have up to the present, don't come to complain anymore when you receive some blows in the struggle.

Before there were anarchists, before there were men conscious of their rights and resolved to make them respected, there was an authority that degraded and enslaved men.

It is thus authority and its more or less conscious disciples "who have begun" the struggle by violating the imprescriptible rights of individuals, and when one of them finally rises up to enforce them, his act, whatever it may be, has not been an attack, but a legitimate defense.

Yes, whatever is said by the sinister hunters that are called "directors" and the imbeciles who echo them, it is not the anarchist hare who started it.

—G. Etievant
Libertaire, issue no. 103

[1]Spanish prime minister Antonio Cánovas del Castillo, killed by Michele Angiolillo.—Translator.

Caserio: Why He Killed Carnot

Gentlemen of the Jury, – I do not propose to make a defense, but only an explanation of my deed.

Since my early youth, I began to learn that the present society is badly organized, so badly that every day many wretched men commit suicide, leaving wife and children in the most terrible distress.

Workers, by thousands, seek for work and cannot find it. Poor families beg for food, and shiver with cold; they suffer the greatest misery; the little ones ask their miserable mothers for food and the mothers cannot give them, because they have nothing. The few things which the home contained have already been sold or pawned. All they can do is beg alms, and often they are arrested as vagabonds.

I went away from my native place because I was frequently moved to tears at seeing little girls of eight or ten years old obliged to work fifteen hours a day for the paltry pay of 20 centimes. Young women of eighteen or twenty years old also work fifteen hours a day for a mockery of remuneration. And that happens not only to my fellow-countrymen, but to all the workers, who sweat the whole day long for a crust of bread, while their labor produces wealth in abundance. The workers are obliged to live under the most wretched conditions, and their food consists of a little bread, a few spoonfuls of rice, and water; so that by the time they are thirty or forty years old they are exhausted, and go to die in the hospitals. Besides, in consequence of bad food and overwork, these unhappy creatures are, by hundreds, devoured by *pellegra* – a disease that, in my country, attacks, as the physicians say, those who are badly fed and lead a life of toil and privation.

I observed that there are a great many people who are hungry, and many children who suffer, whilst bread and clothes abound in the towns. I saw many large shops full of clothing and woollen stuffs, and I saw also warehouses full of wheat and Indian corn, suitable for those who are in want. And, on the other hand, I saw thousands of people who do not work, who produce nothing and live on the labor of others; who spend every day thousands of francs for their amusement; who debauch the daughters of the workers; who own dwellings of forty or fifty rooms, twenty or thirty horses, many servants; in a word, all the pleasures of life.

Alas! How much I suffered seeing this vile society so badly organized!

Many times I said to myself: “Those who amassed the first fortune are the cause of the present inequalities.”

When I was a child, I was taught to love my native land; but when I saw

thousands of workers obliged to quit their country and leave their children and their parents in utter destitution I said to myself: The fatherland does not exist for the poor workers; our country is the whole world. Those who preach the love of country do so because they have in that country their personal interest, their well-being; as the bird defends its nest because it feels comfortable in it.

I believed in God; but when I saw so great an inequality between men, I acknowledged that it was not God who created man, but man who created God. And I discovered that those who want their property to be respected have an interest in preaching the existence of paradise and hell, and in keeping the people in ignorance.

On account of all this I became an Anarchist.

On the 1st of May, 1891, when the workers of the whole world demanded a holiday, the governments, republican as well as monarchical, answered with rifles and prisons; many workers were killed or wounded, and many more of them were sent to prison.

Since that year I have been an Anarchist, because I have ascertained that the Anarchist ideal is consistent with my own feeling. Amongst Anarchists alone have I found good and sincere men, who know how to fight for the sake of the workers.

I also began to do Anarchist propaganda, and did not delay in passing on to action. I have not been long in France, but in this short time I have seen that all governments are alike. I have seen the poor miners of the North, who struck because they did not earn enough to support their families, and after more than three months of struggle they were forced by hunger to return to work on the old terms: but the government did not care at all for these thousands of workers, because it was engaged in preparing festivals for the Franco-Russian alliance in Paris, Toulon and Marseilles.

It was said that millions of francs must be obtained by new taxes for these festivities; and the men who have sold their conscience to the bourgeoisie – that is to say, the journalists – wrote many articles in order to demonstrate that the alliance between France and Russia would be very profitable for the workers. And yet we poor workers are always in the same wretched condition, and have to pay the expenses of the festivities of governments. Still, when we ask for work and bread, we are shot down, as were the miners of the North, the peasants of Sicily, and many others.

Not long ago, Vaillant threw a bomb in the Chamber of Deputies to protest against the present system of society. He killed no one, only wounded some

persons; yet the bourgeois justice sentenced him to death. And not satisfied with the condemnation of the guilty man, they began to pursue the Anarchists and arrest not only those who had known Vaillant, but even those who had merely been present at any Anarchist lecture.

The government did not think of their wives and children. It did not consider that the men kept in prison were not the only ones who suffered, and that their little one cried for bread. Bourgeois justice did not trouble itself about these innocent ones, who do not yet know what society is. It is no fault of theirs that their fathers are in prison: they only want to eat.

The government went on searching private houses, opening private letters, forbidding lectures and meetings, and practicing the most infamous oppressions against us.

Even now, hundreds of Anarchists are arrested for having written an article in a newspaper or for having expressed an opinion in public.

Why, if the governments use against us guns, chains and prisons, should we Anarchists, who have to defend our lives, remain skulking at home? Should we renounce our idea, which is the truth? No, on the contrary, we will answer those governments with dynamite, bombs, and daggers.

In one word, we must do all we can to destroy the bourgeoisie and the governments.

Emile Henry threw a bomb in a restaurant; I avenged myself with a poniard.

Gentlemen of the Jury, you are the representatives of bourgeois society; if you want my head take it; but do not believe that in so doing you will stop the Anarchist propaganda. Take care, for men reap what they have sown.

The governments have begun to make martyrs: they have garrotted in Xeres, hanged in Chicago, shot in Barcelona, guillotined in Paris. The last words the victims pronounced in the moment of their execution were: "Death to the bourgeoisie!"

These words have crossed the seas and the mountains; they have penetrated into the towns, into the villages, into the homes of millions of workers.

The workers, until now, have suffered themselves to be led by ambitious men, who try to rule them by means of associations, trade unions, syndicates and other impostures, in order to be elected as Deputies or Councillors and so live without working.

But now, at last, it is recognized that only the violent Revolution against

the bourgeois system can help the workers.

When the Revolution has taken place, the workers will no longer commit suicide through misery; they will suffer no more by years and years of imprisonment; they will be hanged, shot, garrotted, guillotined no more. For the bourgeoisie, the kings, the presidents, the ministers, the senators, the deputies, the judges of the assize court and police magistrates will have perished beneath the people's barricade in the blaze of the Social Revolution.

(This English translation of Sante Caserio's suppressed statement to the jury was published by Freedom Press in 1901 as a pamphlet entitled "Anarchy on Trial.")

The Feast of Vultures **By Voltairine de Cleyre**

(As the three anarchists, Vaillant, Henry and Caserio, were led to their several executions, a voice from the prison cried loudly, "Vive l'anarchie!" Through watch and yard the cry escaped, and no man owned the voice, but the cry is still resounding through the world.)

*A moan in the gloam in the air-peaks heard—
The Bird of Omen—the wild, fierce Bird,
A flight
In the night,
Like a whiz of light,
Arrowy winging before the storm,
Far away flinging
The whistling, singing,
White-curdled drops, wind-blown and warm,
From its beating, flapping,
Thunderous wings;
Crashing and clapping
The split night swings,
And rocks and totters,
Bled of its levin,
And reels and mutters
A curse to Heaven!
Reels and mutters and rolls and dies,
With a wild light streaking its black, blind eyes.
Far, Far, Far
Through the red, mad morn,
Like a hurtling star,
Through the air upborne,
The Herald-Singer,
The Terror-Bringer,*

*Speeds— and behind, through the cloud-rags torn,
 Gather and wheel a million wings,
 Clanging as iron where the hammer rings;
 The whipped sky shivers,
 The White Gate shakes,
 The ripped throne quivers,
 The dumb God wakes,
 And feels in his heart the talon-stings.
 “Ruin! Ruin!” the Whirlwind cries,
 And it leaps at his throat and tears his eyes;
 “Death for death, as ye long have dealt;
 The heads of your victims your heads shall pelt;
 The blood ye wrung to get drunk upon,
 Drink, and be poisoned! On, Herald, on!”
 Behold, behold,
 How a moan is grown!
 A cry hurled high ‘gainst a scaffold’s joist!
 The Voice of Defiance— the loud, wild Voice!
 Whirled
 Through the world,
 A smoke-wreath curled
 (Breath ‘round hot kisses) around a fire!
 See! the ground hisses
 With red-streaming blood-clots of long-frozen ire,
 Waked by the flying
 Wild voice as it passes;
 Groaning and crying,
 The surge of the masses
 Rolls and flashes
 With thunderous roar—
 Seams and lashes
 The livid shore—
 Seams and lashes and crunches and beats,
 And drags a ragged wall to its howling retreats!
 Swift, swift, swift,
 Thwart the blood-rain’s fall,
 Through the fire-shot rift
 Of the broken wall,
 The prophet-crying
 The storm-song sighing,
 Flies— and from under Night’s lifted pall,
 Swarming, menace ten million darts,
 Uplifting fragments of human shards!*

*Ah, white teeth chatter,
And dumb jaws fall,
While winged fires scatter
Till gloom gulfs all
Save the boom of the cannon that storm the forts
That the people bombard with their comrades' hearts;
"Vengeance! Vengeance!" the voices scream,
And the vulture pinions whirl and stream!
"Knife for knife, as ye long have dealt;
The edge ye whetted for us be felt,
Ye chopper of necks, on your own, your own!
Bare it, Coward! On, Prophet, on!"*

*Behold how high
Rolls a prison cry!*

--Philadelphia, August 1894

Why I Shot Clemenceau by Emile Cottin

About seven months ago the idea came to my mind to kill Clemenceau, the enemy of mankind. Several days ago I decided to execute my plan.

I am the only man responsible for this act.

I wanted to kill the man who is instigating a new war. I am an anarchist, a friend of the people, Germans not excluded, a friend of mankind and brotherhood.

These words deeply penetrate into the heart of every man. Clemenceau is a tyrant and a tyrant of the highest degree. Clemenceau is making the fighters for the popular cause rot in the free prisons of France. Clemenceau is the greatest enemy of the great free-thinking people. It is no wonder he is called "Tiger." But he is not a tiger — he is a man. Prior to the March revolution in Russia there were sent to the French front many Russian soldiers, the figures varying between 100,000 and 300,000 men. Reliable information it is impossible to obtain. They replaced English and French troops in the most dangerous sections of the battle line; well supplied with arms and provisions they took the place of a large number of the Allied troops, which were sent to police different sections of France.

Unexpectedly the revolution in Russia broke out; Russian soldiers immediately began to be insistent in their demands, and created a Soviet of the soldiers' deputies, which was arrested in its entire personnel. Nobody knows

of its fate up to the present. This did not stop the Russian soldiers; they protested as a single man, and refused to advance. Their superiors were infuriated and began to threaten, but nothing could shake the Russians. At the council of the generals and counsels of the old regime, the tyrant rulers, it was decided to take the Russians off the firing line and intern them behind the bars of the camp for the interned. They were recognized as enemies. But that was not the end of the sufferings of the Russians. Terrible conditions, executions of the leaders, arrests of the conscientious soldiers — nothing could shake the firm attitude of the Russian soldiers, who had scented the fire of the revolutionary flame in their native land.

They categorically refused to obey. Detachment after detachment was sent to the rear-guard camps, where they awaited their fate.

When the Kerensky government had fallen, the sympathy of the Russian soldiers was on the side of the Soviets of Workers' Deputies. But in spite of that some of the detachments of the Russian army still fought on the front lines. Russia signed the Brest-Litovsk treaty, and those troops that were under the influence of the revolutionary enthusiasm understood and decided to leave the struggle. The last detachments refused to go into the fight, basing their claim on the fact that they were neutral citizens, they understood the reality of the war. Their main demand was to return to their native land. This request — and then demand — the French premier, Clemenceau, ordered to suppress. The order of the French government was obeyed immediately, and many Russians, true sons of the cold valleys of Russia, fell before the bullets of the treacherous weapons of those cunning politicians. Many were wounded. Clemenceau's order "not to spare bullets" was executed according to all the rules of military tactics. With waving flags the battalions of the free republic returned from the places of their crimes accompanied by the sounds of the "Marseillaise." A few days afterward a colonel was sent to the camp where the irreconcilable Russians were kept, who delivered a fiery speech. He spoke of revolution, and finished by an appeal to enlist in the army to fight against the Bolsheviks. Twenty thousand men believed these fables, telling them that Russia was in danger and decided to save Russia. They were formed into detachments and were sent to the nearest military camp in order to be attached to the Czecho-Slovak army. The rest, tens of thousands of men, as one man decidedly and determinedly answered: "The Russian people have concluded peace; they might have made a mistake, as you say; yet you treated us cruelly even after the downfall of the Czar's regime, and therefore we demand to be sent to our native land; there on the spot we will deliberate as to what must be suppressed for the Russian people."

The French authorities became enraged, and having caught the leaders of the military Soviets sent them without trial to hard labor, to an island prison, located not far from Bordeaux. The rest were exiled to places where no crow

flies. After that a dishonest reaction was instituted; the Russian soldiers were tormented to the extreme. Then having tormented them sufficiently and enjoyed it enough, the Premier ordered the irreconcilable Russians to be sent to Africa. Forty thousand men were sent there. While they were being sent into slavery there came unexpectedly a Russian colonel, decorated from head to foot with the Czar's medals, and facing the rows of soldiers responded to the order of Clemenceau with the following words:

"My boys, it would truly be a great mistake if we consented to go to war against our fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, and the whole Russian people. First of all what we need to do is to return to Russia, and there we shall see what government we Russians shall defend.

"You are sending my boys to slavery under the hot rays of the African sun. Send me also with them, for I believe exactly the way they do."

Clemenceau's order was obeyed, and 40,000 Russians for their fidelity to the popular cause were sent to slavery in the African plantations of the French.

Many, many martyrs have fallen under the scorching sun of the sandy deserts of Africa. They died for their unshakable faith in the revolutionary Russian people. Glory and honor to you, brothers, true fighters and indomitable martyrs!

Last November, after the armistice with Germany, tens of thousands of war prisoners were liberated, among them many Russians. As a stream this human wave rushed in the direction of the Allied lines en masse, passing the outposts and blockhouses.

The Russians were in a terrible condition, beaten, wounded, and bare-footed. They did not resemble men at all, but rather apparitions. Having reached the American lines they were stopped, given American uniforms, but were forbidden to proceed further.

Where are they, what is the matter with them? There is no information. Where they are — martyrs — remains a secret. Their number reaches between 10,000 and 15,000 men. There is some unreliable information that they are being kept in the camps as prisoners of war in Paris and other cities of France.

Many refugees passing the battle line found themselves in the cities where they were caught and told: "You have no right to live in this country. You must return to Russia, and enlist in the Czecho-Slovak army. You must fight against the Soviets." "We cannot do it," replied the Russian prisoners of war. "We must be sent to Russia and see the people at work. There on the spot shall we see whom we must defend."

Whatever be the power of the reactionaries in France, whatever attempts were made to break down their will and their faith in the righteousness of the Russian people, they have failed. The soul of the Russian soldier is the soul of the whole Russian people — of 180,000,000 people. Such a soul can be convinced only by the truth. Enough of silence ! It is the time to speak, even to shout.

I am an Anarchist, a friend of the people, not excluding Germany, a friend of mankind, of the brotherhood of man.

That is where the heart of man lies. That is where lies the spirit of protest and revenge. I lifted my hand; the protest of the shot resounded, and the "Tiger" was wounded.

—Emile Cottin — A Frenchman

—Published in *Freedom: A Journal of Constructive Anarchism*, March 15, 1919, (Vol. I, No. 3.), edited by Harry Kelly and Leonard D. Abbott

Historical Note:

Louis Emile Cottin (1896-1937) was an anarchist combatant and one of the most inglorious French practitioners of "propaganda by deed". Born into a working class family of carpenters, Cottin became exposed to libertarian ideas in 1915 when he met the French anarchists Emile Armand, Pierre Chardon, Sebastian Faure, and the Spanish militant Buenaventura Durruti. In May of 1918, he witnessed French municipal guards charge and fire on strikers in the munitions factories. He was profoundly disgusted and in subsequent anarchist meetings he attended, he heard cries of "down with Clemenceau, the strike breaker" and in the tradition of French attendats, he decided to kill him.

Georges Clemenceau was a classic example of an internationalist Leftist turning into a Nationalist Right-winger once ascending to political power. He began his political career as an extreme socialist who used his paper of 1880, *La Justice*, to build a reputation as a crusading foe of "corruption" and a defender of the little man, but once he attained power as French Minister of the Interior in 1906, he advocated using military force to suppress domestic disorder. By the time he launched his new journal of 1913, *L'Homme Libre*, he had become a fanatical patriot, pure and simple, who called for rearmament against Germany and a total mobilization of the country once the war began. This bellicose jingoism vaulted him into the French premiership at the age of seventy-six, where he became a living symbol of domination to the anarchists of that era.

On February 19th, 1919 Cottin fired on Clemenceau's car with a Browning revolver, but unfortunately, only one of the seven bullets fired hit Clemenceau,

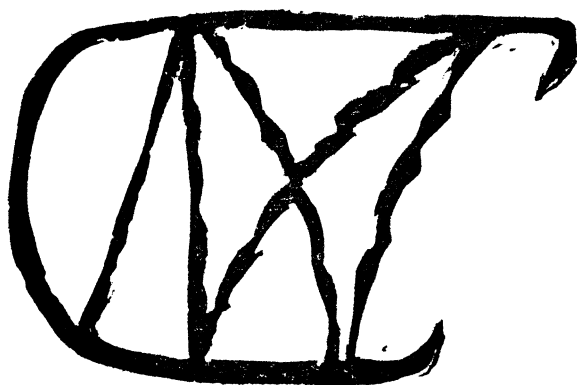
who survived. The 23-year old Cottin was condemned to death at his trial, where he made the following statement:

"I don't understand present society...it is authoritarian and only creates a mass of miseries. The authority has always been a scarecrow in the hands of the governors to the detriment of the masses. I hold all governments responsible for all wars which have resulted in the murder of millions of individuals".

The anarchist paper, *Le Libertaire*, began a campaign on Cottin's behalf and managed to get his death sentence commuted to ten years in prison. It was during this period of incarceration that Cottin composed the "communiqué" reprinted above, and although he wears his communist sympathies on his sleeve, his attempt was nonetheless laudable, as there's no such thing as an innocent politician. Cottin was freed from prison in 1924, but had to face house arrest in the Oise region. In September of 1936 he ignored the restrictions on his movements and traveled to Spain, where he joined his old friend Buenaventura Durruti to fight in the Civil War and Revolution. He was killed on September 8th, 1937 on the front of Zaragoza, fighting with the International Group of the Durruti Column.

On an interesting sidenote, there is actually a flower named after Cottin, the "Louis Emile Cottin", a small Premier Group cultivar with dark foliage, maroon margins, and yellow-orange and apricot petals that is considered of the best Canna varieties and seed parents around!

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